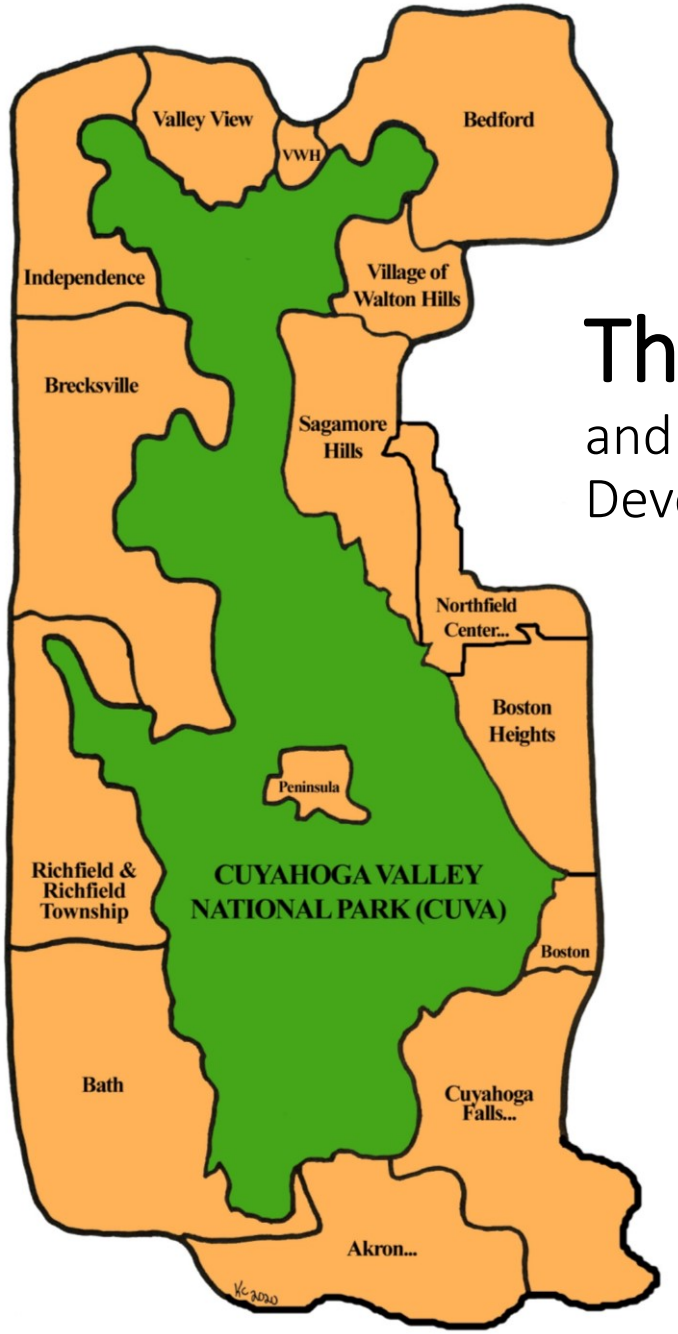

The First Ring

and its Large Untapped Economic Development Opportunity

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Unique Zone, Unique Opportunity

The Cuyahoga Valley National Park and its first ring of communities are unique in the United States. This area is not a traditional National Park of intact natural wilderness that was preserved to maintain its natural wonder, but rather a beautiful and formerly private and developed area surrounded by two major metropolitan statistical areas that is being transformed back into wilderness

The First Ring communities have an unprecedented opportunity to create new revenue streams and to attract new businesses and residents with thoughtful collaborative competition toward a significant sustainable-tourism ecosystem

The First Ring of the Cuyahoga Valley National Park is one of the single largest untapped economic opportunities in Northeast Ohio, if not the Midwest, and The First Ring communities are on the front lines of this opportunity

Think of The First Ring as the very first growth ring on a tree – what a mighty tree this new collaboration can become.

The First Ring CUVA Economic Zone

New revenue through sustainable-tourism economic development

- City of Akron
- Bath Township
- City of Bedford
- Village of Boston Heights
- Boston Township
- City of Brecksville
- City of Cuyahoga Falls
- City of Independence
- Northfield Center Township
- Village of Peninsula
- Village of Richfield
- Richfield Township
- Sagamore Hills Township
- Village of Valley View
- Village of Walton Hills

- 15 communities that directly border the Cuyahoga Valley National Park constitute **The First Ring**
- Home to 321,000+ people with population growth @ -0.88
- Government Revenues > $620m
- Median Household Income > $99,000 (national average: $59,039)

The **CUVA Economic Zone** is the league of cities, towns, villages and townships (The First Ring) and a yet to be established set of rules of collaboration and competition for the league, designed to grow the sustainable-tourism ecosystem, foster a lab of big ideas and engineer a competitive advantage to attract new tourism projects, businesses and people

Bottom Line Up-Front: Nobody is Growing This Alone

The Cuyahoga Valley National Park is the 13th most visited in the United States and the only National Park in Ohio.

This demands:

A Sustainable-Tourism Economic Development Plan of Action by the Communities that Border the Park

- To grow more revenue from existing and new sources, especially in post COVID-19 pandemic economy
- To grow more businesses that serve visitors and residents alike
- To attract more homeowners
- To responsibly attract more recreational visitors

Thoughtful collaborative competition is the only way to make this growth happen

True or False

The First Ring population is greater than:

1. Cincinnati, OH
2. Pittsburgh, PA
3. St. Louis, MO
4. Cleveland, OH
5. Toledo, OH

1. True (303,940) 2. True (300,286) 3. True (300,576) 4. False, but only by <76k (396,815) 5. True (272,779)

Low Hanging Fruit of the Valley

The CUVA Economic Zone has approximately $620m in tax revenues, so:

- A 10% average increase in all tax revenues driven by sustainable-tourism related activities across the CUVA Economic Zone would raise $62m in government revenue; a 2.5% average increase would raise $15.5m in tax revenue
- As a comparison, the 2019 Cuyahoga Valley National Park's total economic impact *across greater Northeast Ohio* is only $57m across all sectors – what is the government slice of this revenue?*

*Detailed analysis and research is needed for local and state tax revenue projections from sustainable-tourism economic development in the CUVA Economic Zone

All the Responsibility, Little ROI

- Since 1974, when the U.S. National Recreation Area was formed, The First Ring has been hosting, supporting, policing, and paying for an ever-expanding population of annual visitors, from nearly 500,000 visitors in 1978 and more than 2,200,000 today
- First Ring is incurring the burden of supporting the 13th most visited National Park in the nation but not maximizing the benefit

You Don’t Win the Games You Don’t Play

- The CUVA Economic Zone will create new revenue streams for the communities and towns most impacted by the Cuyahoga Valley National park
- The creation of the CUVA Economic Zone by The First Ring allows us to join the regional, state and national big leagues to dream big about our unique place in the world
- The CUVA Economic Zone aligns us to take advantage of the perfect conditions for success that have are hard fought and decades in the making
- We can’t win if we don’t organize, train and play

MIA: Thoughtful collaborative competition

The First Ring economic development plans largely focus on residential land use and traditional business

The National Park and its support organizations focus on conservation and park management

Collaborative sustainable-tourism planning by The First Ring:

- can provide a third leg of the economic development stool and open the door to new revenue streams
- will help nurture the innovation ecosystem with creative new businesses catering to new and existing customers
- creates a new way to market our region to residents and the world
- creates a new lens for lobbying the county, state and federal government toward tourism and infrastructure projects
- is a vehicle to grow intergovernmental relationships and eliminate zero-sum games
- allows the CUVA Economic Zone to compete with other similar sized competitors rather than be left behind

Concrete Example

- The First Ring could lobby to expedite the removal of the Gorge Dam in Cuyahoga Falls, near Akron, in order to bring the area closer to becoming a national sport fishing destination sooner, due to cleaner water (taking advantage of water quality improvements due to the near complete massive Akron sewer project)
- The sewer project and the damn removal bring sport fishing in the Cuyahoga River and its tributaries closer to reality
- The Ohio Department of Natural Resources is planning to stock the Cuyahoga River and tributaries with sport fish, including sturgeon, when the conditions are right
- Sports fishing destinations typically have vibrant sustainable-tourism economies

Imagine a developer wants to build a high-end spa and hotel on private land on the western shoulders of the Cuyahoga Valley

The high-end spa and hotel will feature

- Indoor and outdoor infinity pools
- A world class spa
- multiple dining options from formal to trail casual
- direct access to the trails of the National Park
- World class concierge services for connections to local amenities

Like Any Other League, Collaboration and Competition is Required

- Imagine Bath, Brecksville and Richfield are competing to be the community for the high-end spa and hotel, whose developer was attracted to the CUVA Economic Zone by the collaboration of The First Ring

Imagine a developer wants to build a state-of-the-art RV site on private land on the eastern shoulders of the Cuyahoga Valley

- The state-of-the-art RV site would feature
  - Landscaping for privacy
  - Gas fire pits at each RV pod
  - A workout facility
  - A putting green
  - A dog park
  - Direct access to the National Park
  - Concierge for local activities

Like Any League There are Lots of Games in Each Season

- Imagine Boston Heights, Cuyahoga Falls and Northfield Center competing for the high-tech RV camp site that takes advantage of the new popularity of RV's spawned by the COVID-19 epidemic

Winning Games…

- Certainly, the winning communities of the Spa & Hotel or the RV site will pop the champagne bottles and the losers will feel the agony of defeat, however…
- The developer won't be able to pit the communities against each other to eke out deals that are only good for the developer
- All the communities can view the wins as part of a long season of games, rather than a zero-sum game, and can use the wins of others in their marketing activities for the next game
- They can all celebrate the win as a whole because they have "league structure"

Playing in the Big Leagues

The First Ring CUVA Economic Zone needs "league structure" to:

- To attract regular and reoccurring business opportunity along the borders of the Cuyahoga Valley National Park
- To collaborating on major infrastructure projects such as a major bike trail project that builds dedicated pathways directly to the towpath, reducing bike traffic on main roads and reducing automobile traffic into the National Park
- Create an ideas lab for the CUVA Economic Zone
- To communicate with the rest of the world about the good work being done

There are So Many Good Ideas…

- Land bank/sustainable-tourism yoked development deals
- Farm to table markets, stands, eateries, restaurants
- 5-star spas and hotels
- Family oriented resorts
- Hotel/motel development and re-development to serve park visitors in strategic locations
- RV sites
- Camp sites
- Marketing for flights to Cleveland Hopkins and Akron Canton airports
- Electric trolley service between key amenities, other transportation services
- Concierge and guided tours companies
- Marketing/advertising in tourism and destination websites
- Collaborative and local P.R. campaigns promoting The First Ring as a place to live, play and explore nature
- Kayak and canoe services and rental
- Bike rentals
- …

About Kenneth Clarke, 1802 LLC

I am passionate about the Cuyahoga Valley. My family moved to the Cuyahoga Valley in 1802 and were some of the very first pioneers to call the Cuyahoga Valley home. My ancestors wrote about a wilderness with wolves, bears and trees so dense that no sunlight hit the ground until they started felling trees to build their log cabin and to clear fields for crops. My family founded one of the first local governments of Northampton Township, and established milling industries, among other things

I started 1802 LLC so that I can contribute in the spirit of my ancestors by working on projects that help make the area a better place to live, and to help reclaim the Cuyahoga Valley back to the wilderness my family discovered 218 years ago

I have experience with government, public-private partnerships and private non-profit organizations, as well as private business. I have raised more than $50m toward important causes and have worked on successful international, national, state and local efforts

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